

(19)  Canadian
Intellectual Property
Office

An Agency of
Industry Canada

Office de la Propriété,
Intellectuelle
du Canada

Un organisme
d'Industrie Canada

(11) **CA 2 338 080**

(13) **A1**

(40) 03.09.2001

(43) 03.09.2001

(12)

(21) 2 338 080

(51) Int. Cl. 7: **A63F 13/12, G06F 17/60**

(22) 23.02.2001

(30) 09/518,026 US 03.03.2000

(71) **REACH PUBLISHING SYSTEMS, INC.,**
9933 Alliance Road, CINCINNATI, XX (US).

(72) **SHULTZ, CARL D. (US).**
HILES, MICHAEL G. (US).
SLATTERY, ROBERT J. (US).

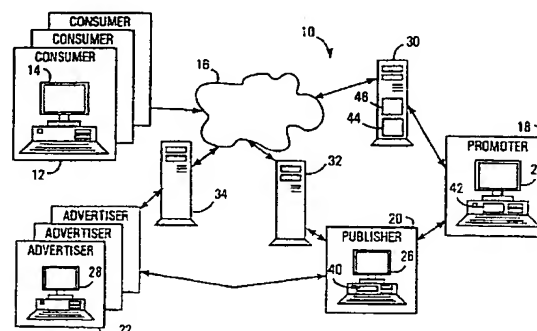
(74) **MACRAE & CO.**

(54) **SYSTEME ET METHODE DE JEU DE HASARD FAISANT APPEL A UNE PUBLICATION AU MOYEN DE L'INTERNET**

(54) **SYSTEM AND METHOD OF PLAYING A PUBLICATION-BASED GAME OF CHANCE THROUGH THE INTERNET**

(57)

A printed publication promotion incorporates both a copy of a printed publication and an electronic communication system such as a networked computer system for interacting with an Internet web page. A promoter assigns potentially prize-winning indicia to respective copies recipients of the printed publication, either on the mailing label or somewhere within the body of the publication. Generally, each copy with assigned potentially prize-winning indicia is associated with a specific recipient. The promoter causes selected prize-winning indicia to be accessible by the recipients via the electronic communication system. Thus, in order to win identified prize or prizes associated with the selected indicia, the recipient verifies that the selected prize-winning indicia from the electronic communication system match the assigned potentially prize-winning indicia in the printed publication. Then, the recipient sends a confirmation request message to the promoter of the publication-based game of chance. The promoter confirms the confirmation request message by matching the selected prize-winning indicia with the copy of the printed publication and/or the specific recipient. If a match is confirmed, the promoter causes the prize to be delivered to the recipient.





Office de la Propriété
Intellectuelle
du Canada

Un organisme
d'Industrie Canada

Canadian
Intellectual Property
Office

An agency of
Industry Canada

CA 2338080 A1 2001/09/03

(21) **2 338 080**

(12) **DEMANDE DE BREVET CANADIEN
CANADIAN PATENT APPLICATION**

(13) **A1**

(22) Date de dépôt/Filing Date: 2001/02/23

(41) Mise à la disp. pub./Open to Public Insp.: 2001/09/03

(30) Priorité/Priority: 2000/03/03 (09/518,026) US

(51) Cl.Int.⁷/Int.Cl.⁷ A63F 13/12, G06F 17/60

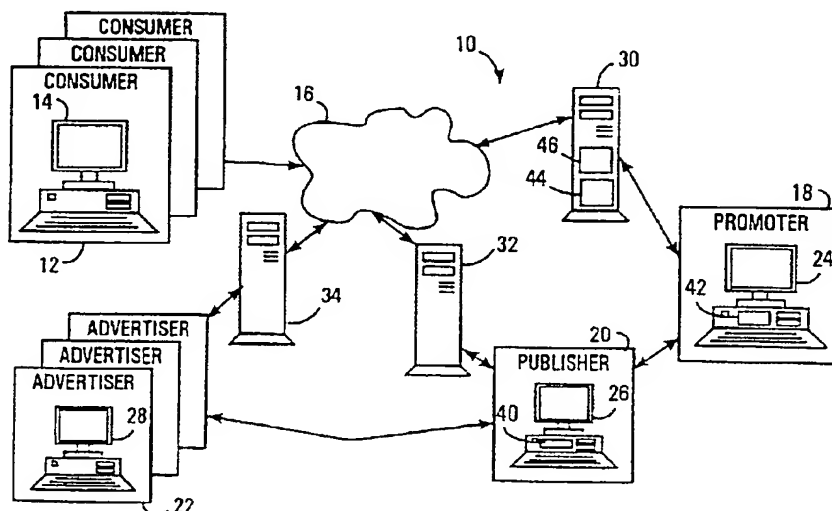
(71) Demandeur/Applicant:
REACH PUBLISHING SYSTEMS, INC., US

(72) Inventeurs/Inventors:
SLATTERY, ROBERT J., US;
SHULTZ, CARL D., US;
HILES, MICHAEL G., US

(74) Agent: MACRAE & CO.

(54) Titre : SYSTEME ET METHODE DE JEU DE HASARD FAISANT APPEL A UNE PUBLICATION AU MOYEN DE L'INTERNET

(54) Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD OF PLAYING A PUBLICATION-BASED GAME OF CHANCE THROUGH THE INTERNET



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A printed publication promotion incorporates both a copy of a printed publication and an electronic communication system such as a networked computer system for interacting with an Internet web page. A promoter assigns potentially prize-winning indicia to respective copies recipients of the printed publication, either on the mailing label or somewhere within the body of the publication. Generally, each copy with assigned potentially prize-winning indicia is associated with a specific recipient. The promoter causes selected prize-winning indicia to be accessible by the recipients via the electronic communication system. Thus, in order to win identified prize or prizes associated with the selected indicia, the recipient verifies that the selected prize-winning indicia from the electronic communication system match the assigned potentially prize-winning indicia in the printed publication. Then, the recipient sends a confirmation request message to the promoter of the publication-based game of chance. The promoter confirms the confirmation request message by matching the selected prize-winning indicia with the copy of the printed publication and/or the specific recipient. If a match is confirmed, the promoter causes the prize to be delivered to the recipient.

Canada

<http://opic.gc.ca> · Ottawa-Hull K1A 0C9 · <http://cipo.gc.ca>

OPIC · CIPO 191

OPIC



CIPO

ABSTRACT**SYSTEM AND METHOD OF PLAYING A PUBLICATION-BASED GAME OF CHANCE THROUGH THE INTERNET**

A printed publication promotion incorporates both a copy of a printed publication and an electronic communication system such as a networked computer system for interacting with an Internet web page. A promoter assigns potentially prize-winning indicia to respective copies recipients of the printed publication, either on the mailing label or somewhere within the body of the publication. Generally, each copy with assigned potentially prize-winning indicia is associated with a specific recipient. The promoter causes selected prize-winning indicia to be accessible by the recipients via the electronic communication system. Thus, in order to win identified prize or prizes associated with the selected indicia, the recipient verifies that the selected prize-winning indicia from the electronic communication system match the assigned potentially prize-winning indicia in the printed publication. Then, the recipient sends a confirmation request message to the promoter of the publication-based game of chance. The promoter confirms the confirmation request message by matching the selected prize-winning indicia with the copy of the printed publication and/or the specific recipient. If a match is confirmed, the promoter causes the prize to be delivered to the recipient.

- 1 -

Atty. Docket No. RHM/20

SYSTEM AND METHOD OF PLAYING A PUBLICATION-BASED GAME OF CHANCE THROUGH THE INTERNET

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to games of chance. More particularly, the present invention relates a printed publication contest incorporating electronic communication with the contest promoter.

5 Background of the Invention

Publications generate revenue from some combination of contributions, subscriptions, and paid advertisements. Increasing circulation generally enhances each of these sources of revenue, as well as reduces the costs to publish through economies of scale.

10 Many publications rely on advertisements incorporated into the publication. Consequently, a publisher of a publication typically needs to attract potential advertisers with a significant number of potentially interested consumers reachable through the publication. Often, the publisher generally

- 2 -

has to provide the publication at a nominal price or free to a recipient consumer in order to attain this significant number of interested consumers. However, merely distributing a large number of publications is often an insufficient basis for attracting advertisers. Publications with advertising are
5 generally distributed at little or no monetary cost to the recipient, and thus may not be valued by the recipient. Therefore, advertisers benefit from features that attract the recipient to review advertisements in the publication rather than immediately discarding or ignoring the publication.

Publishers have long known to include games and contests in
10 their publications to increase consumer interest and readership. For example, contests such as including a range of winning serial numbers for a U.S. currency bill to win a prize has been used in newspapers to increase readership. Also, lottery numbers have been printed in newspapers for a similar purpose. Similarly, bingo-type games have been printed in a publication
15 to encourage a recipient to look at a number of advertisements in the publication. Specifically, the recipient matched certain indicia included in various advertisements with the bingo-type matrix that contained the winning indicia. Publishers have also included a potentially winning number on a mailing label on a copy of a printed publication with directions to locate a
20 winning number somewhere in the copy of the printed publication. Thus, the recipient is encouraged to review at least a portion of the copy of the printed publication.

Known promotions of printed publications, such as games and contests, are limited because printed publications are a one-way, static form

- 3 -

of communication. Specifically, the publisher lacks feedback from recipients of copies of the publications. Also, known promotions are a one-time opportunity to engage the interest of the recipient of the copy of the printed publication. Furthermore, known promotions fail in encouraging non-recipients
5 to request a copy of the printed publication.

Even with attractive features to increase readership, a publisher of a free publication generally lacks feedback as to the readership and consumer interest. More particularly, the publisher lacks feedback as to the efficacy of the features such as contests and games in promoting the
10 readership. Even if recipients pay for a copy of a publication, the publisher has difficulty attributing any increase in circulation to specific advertisements or features such as contests and games. Other factors such as improved distribution may be responsible for fluctuation in circulation.

Advertisers have traditionally included features in their
15 advertisements to help gauge their efficacy. For instance, advertisements often include coupons or similar special instructions for receiving a price discount. Coupons provide useful feedback as to the success of advertisements since the coupons can be traced back to the publication.

Publishers are unlikely to benefit from the feedback inherent in
20 coupons. Advertisers have a disincentive to share the results from the advertising in that the publisher may increase advertising rates if proved of increased value. Even if a publisher could learn about coupon use, such information is only a portion of the efficacy of an advertisement. Some

- 4 -

recipients of the advertisement would be motivated in part or in whole by considerations other than price discounts from a coupon.

Generally known publications containing contests have other disadvantages for publishers. A publisher would benefit from knowing when
5 a recipient played a contest even if the recipient did not win. The publisher would then have feedback as to the number of recipients who have been attracted to the contest. A problem with generally known contests in publications is that the publisher generally only receives feedback from a game winner and not from others.

10 In addition to the lack of feedback from recipients of printed publications, known promotions are a one-time opportunity to engage the interest of the recipient. For example, generally only one contest time period can be included in each publication. A recipient can review the publication one time to determine whether prize-winning contest indicia are included, and
15 thereafter discard the publication. The publisher would benefit from an attractive feature that would encourage retaining the publication for a period of time approximating the time value of the advertisements incorporated in the publication.

In addition to the lack of feedback from recipients, known
20 promotions fail in reaching non-recipients. In order for a consumer to obtain a copy, a publisher must widely distribute copies of the printed publication to a broad mailing list of recipient addresses. In addition, or alternatively, the publisher may place copies at a large number of locations. These distribution techniques are often ineffective. For example, the publisher may have

- 5 -

difficulty in keeping his mailing lists accurate since recipients may not seek out the publication. Also, misdirected bulk mail copies of a publication are not returned to the publisher. This is especially true when a publisher chooses to target his printed publication to a specific demographic of consumers.

5 Moreover, some individuals may not receive a copy of the publication and not know how to request a copy. In particular, some consumers have an interest in either the advertisements or contests incorporated into the publication and would benefit from a convenient way to contact the publisher.

10 Consequently, a significant need exists for an improved contest that may be incorporated into publications. In particular, the improved contest should give the recipients an incentive to review the publication and to provide feedback to the publisher of the publication.

Summary of the Invention

15 The invention addresses these and other problems associated with the prior art by providing an apparatus, program product and method for a publication-based game of chance, or contest, that incorporates electronic communication as part of the contest.

20 In particular, electronic communication allows for easier, more frequent and more comprehensive, feedback from recipients to the publisher. Advantageously, incorporating electronic communication into a contest enables a printed publication to be used in a plurality of contest time intervals to extend the value of the printed publication. In addition, electronic

- 6 -

communication may be used to permit feedback from non-recipient consumers to the publisher to broaden or target distribution of the printed publication.

Consistent with one aspect of the invention, a method promotes a printed publication by forwarding to a recipient a copy of the printed publication that includes potentially prize-winning indicia. Then a selected prize winning indicia is electronically communicated to the recipient so that the recipient can determine whether it matches his assigned potentially prize winning indicia in the forwarded copy. The method further includes, in response to receiving a confirmation request message from the recipient, confirming the match between the potentially prize-winning indicia in the copy of the printed publication forwarded to the recipient and the selected prize-winning indicia. If the match is confirmed, then the method concludes by presenting a prize associated with the selected prize winning indicia to the recipient.

Consistent with another aspect of the invention, a promotion apparatus includes a program resident in a computer memory. The program is configured to facilitate a promotion of the printed publication by assigning a potentially prize winning indicia to a copy of the printed publication, by selecting and electronically communicating the selected prize winning indicia to a recipient of the copy of the printed publication, and by confirming a match between the assigned potentially prize winning indicia and the selected prize winning indicia in response to a confirmation request message from the recipient.

- 7 -

Consistent with yet another aspect of the invention, a method for promoting a printed publication includes a recipient receiving a copy of a printed publication having assigned potentially prize-winning indicia. The recipient receives an electronic communication to obtain a selected prize winning indicia. Then, the recipient compares the assigned potentially prize winning indicia in the copy of the printed publication with the selected prize winning indicia contained in the electronic communication. In the event of a match between the assigned potentially prize winning indicia and the selected prize winning indicia, the recipient sends a confirmation request message to a promoter of the contest.

These and other advantages and features, which characterize the invention, are set forth in the claims annexed hereto and forming a further part hereof. However, for a better understanding of the invention, and of the advantages and objectives attained through its use, reference should be made to the Drawings, and to the accompanying descriptive matter, in which there are described exemplary embodiments of the invention.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIGURE 1 is a block diagram of a computer network consistent with the invention.

FIGURE 2 is a block diagram of an exemplary hardware and software environment for a computer from the computer network of FIG. 1.

FIGURE 3 is a block diagram illustrating the electronic communication between a promoter, publication recipient, publisher and advertiser over the computer network of FIG. 1.

- 8 -

FIGURE 4 is a depiction of a publication bearing recipient identifying information such as mailing address and assigned recipient code.

FIGURE 5 is a depiction of the publication of FIG. 4 bearing the assigned indicia and other contest related information.

5 FIGURE 6 is a depiction of a graphical user interface used by a recipient for electronic communication with the promoter via the computer network of FIG. 1.

FIGURE 7 is a flowchart illustrating the sequence of operations performed by the computer network of FIG. 1 to communicate with the
10 recipient.

FIGURE 8 is a flowchart illustrating the sequence of operations performed by the recipient and the computer network to communicate with the promoter.

Detailed Description

15 Hardware and Software Environment

Turning to the Drawings, wherein like numbers denote like parts throughout the several views, Fig. 1 illustrates a publication-based game of chance ("contest") computer network 10 consistent with the invention. The contest computer network 10 operates as a computing platform for providing
20 electronic communication services to promote a printed publication to a plurality of consumers 12. Each consumer 12 may couple to the contest network 10 from their consumer computer system 14 through any number of electronic communications media, e.g., a global public network such as via the Internet 16.

- 9 -

The contest computer network 10 includes a promoter 18 for administering the contest, a publisher 20 for publishing the printed publication including a printed portion of the contest, and a plurality of advertisers 22 for providing advertising for incorporating into the printed publication. The
5 promoter 18, publisher 20 and advertisers 22 may directly communicate electronically from their respective computer systems 24, 26, and 28 to each other. Alternatively, or in addition to direct communication, the promoter 18, publisher 20, and advertisers 22 may couple to the contest computer network 10 through their respective network servers 30, 32, 34.

10 It should be appreciated that communication electronically between the recipient computer system 14 and the promoter computer system 24 is anticipated. However, the publisher 20 and the advertiser 22 need not communicate electronically. For example, the publisher 20 may communicate in person or in writing with the promoter 18 as to a range of potentially prize-
15 winning indicia used in the printed publications. Also, the printed publication may incorporate no advertisements. If advertisements are included, the advertiser 22 may place his advertisement with the publisher 20 also in person or in writing. Neither the publisher 20 nor the advertiser 22 needs to communicate electronically with a recipient 12, although advantages of such
20 interaction will become apparent in the discussion below.

The publisher 20 distributes copies of the printed publication in accordance with the address information for each consumer 12 from a recipient database 40, or "mailing list". Typically each consumer 12 is assigned a unique code to avoid confusingly similar addresses and names of

- 10 -

consumers 12 when matching with prize-winning indicia. "Recipient" herein refers to consumers 12 that have been included in the recipient database 40 for receiving a copy of the printed publication. "Consumers" also includes those that may have an interest in the printed publication and/or the electronic
5 communication with the contest computer system 10, but are not included in the recipient database 40. The promoter computer system 24 includes a promotion database 42 for tracking the information necessary for the publication-based game of chance, or contest.

The promoter also facilitates the electronic communication with
10 consumers 12 by providing an electronic communication system 44 including various hardware and/or software components that enable graphical, video, audio, and/or text transmission between the promoter 18 and the consumer 12. The electronic communication system 44 may include, for example, a hypertext mark-up language (HTML) web server resident on promoter network
15 server 30. Other examples include software and/or hardware configured to transmit electronic information to a personal digital assistant (PDA), a fax machine, a voicemail box, etc. Generally, the electronic communication system 44 includes a portion of the contest computer network 10 electronically linking the promoter 18 to the consumer 12.

20 The promoter 18 may facilitate electronic confirmation of a winning recipient of the contest by an electronic confirmation service 46 on the promoter network server 30. Examples of electronic confirmation services 46 may be an automated receiver of telephonic confirmation messages, an

- 11 -

electronic mail ("email") receiver, and an HTML response form accessible via the electronic communication system 44 among others.

The electronic communication system 44 may provide notification each time requested by the consumer 12 ("pulling"). Alternatively, the
5 electronic communication system 44 may allow "pushing" interactive notification by accepting requests from consumers 12 to periodically and electronically communicate currently selected prize-winning indicia in a notification message. For example, a consumer 12 may subscribe to receive a notification message, including the current prize-winning indicia, in the form
10 of text, graphics, audio and/or video.

It should be appreciated that the promotion database 42 and the recipient database 40 may be the same database or be further decentralized or otherwise structured. It should further be appreciated that the same entity may perform two or three of the functions of promoting the contest,
15 publishing the printed publication and advertising in the printed publication. Moreover, advertisements may or may not be incorporated into the printed publication.

An advantage of the contest computer network 10 that will become apparent through the discussion herein is to make a publication-based
20 game of chance more attractive and entertaining for consumers 12. Specifically, accessing selected prize-winning indicia is typically convenient and at little or no cost to the consumer 12 via the Internet 16. Providing confirmation of winning may be similarly convenient and at little or no cost to the consumer 12. Moreover, unlike contests confined to printed publications

- 12 -

without the interactive notification, the consumers 12 may be presented with multiple contest intervals to provide more frequent opportunities to participate.

With regard to the advertisers 22 and publisher 20, an advantage
5 of the contest computer network 10 is that additional opportunities are created for providing advertising to the consumers 12 via the electronic communication system 44. Also, tracking of consumer 12 access to the electronic communication system 44 provides feedback as to the readership of the printed publication.

10 The electronic communication performed by the contest computer network 10 may include various types and formats for various functions such as messaging, notifying, scheduling, and document transmittal. The content of the electronic communication may include audio, text and graphical information transmitted over wires or wireless channels and converted to a
15 human legible form by a computer, fax machine, voice telephone mailbox, pager, automated message to a telephone, hand-held personal assistant, an/or e-mail system.

Fig. 2 illustrates in another way an exemplary hardware and software environment for an apparatus 50 consistent with the invention. For
20 the purposes of the invention, apparatus 50 may represent practically any type of computer, computer system or other programmable electronic device, including the consumer computer 14, the promoter computer 24, the publisher computer 26, the advertiser computer 28, or any of a number of computers in the contest computer network 10 (Fig. 1). Each such computer may be

- 13 -

implemented as a desktop computer, a server computer, a workstation, a portable computer, a handheld computer, an embedded controller, or another other type of single- or multi-user computer. Apparatus 50 may be coupled in a wired or wireless network 10 as shown in Fig. 1. Apparatus 50 will
5 hereinafter also be referred to as a computer, although it should be appreciated the term apparatus may also include other suitable programmable electronic devices consistent with the invention.

Computer 50 typically includes at least one processor 52 coupled to a memory 54. Processor 52 may represent one or more processors (e.g.,
10 microprocessors), and memory 54 may represent the random access memory (RAM) devices comprising the main storage of computer 50, as well as any supplemental levels of memory, e.g., cache memories, nonvolatile or backup memories (e.g., programmable or flash memories), read-only memories, etc. In addition, memory 54 may be considered to include memory storage
15 physically located elsewhere in computer 50, e.g., any cache memory in a processor 52, as well as any storage capacity used as a virtual memory, e.g., as stored on a mass storage device 56 or on another computer coupled to computer 50 via network 62.

Computer 50 also typically receives a number of inputs and outputs for
20 communicating information externally. For interfacing with a user or operator, computer 50 typically includes one or more user input devices 60 (e.g., a keyboard, a mouse, a trackball, a joystick, a touchpad, and/or a microphone, among others) and a display 62 (e.g., a CRT monitor, an LCD display panel, and/or a speaker, among others). For additional storage, computer 50 may

- 14 -

also include one or more mass storage devices 60, e.g., a floppy or other removable disk drive, a hard disk drive, a direct access storage device (DASD), an optical drive (e.g., a CD drive, a DVD drive, etc.), and/or a tape drive, among others. Furthermore, computer 50 may include an interface with one
5 or more networks 62 (e.g., a LAN, a WAN, a wireless network, and/or the Internet, among others) to permit the communication of information with other computers coupled to the network. It should be appreciated that computer 50 typically includes suitable analog and/or digital interfaces between processor 52 and each of components 54-62 as is well known in the art.

10 Computer 50 operates under the control of an operating system 64, and executes or otherwise relies upon various computer software applications, components, programs, objects, modules, databases, data structures, etc. (e.g., as represented by application 66). Moreover, various applications, components, programs, objects, modules, etc. may also execute
15 on one or more processors in another computer coupled to computer 50 via a network 62, e.g., in a distributed or client-server computing environment, whereby the processing required to implement the functions of a computer program may be allocated to multiple computers over a network.

In general, the routines executed to implement the embodiments
20 of the invention, whether implemented as part of an operating system or a specific application, component, program, object, module or sequence of instructions will be referred to herein as computer programs, or simply programs. The computer programs typically comprise one or more instructions that are resident at various times in various memory and storage devices in a

- 15 -

computer, and that, when read and executed by one or more processors in a computer, cause that computer to perform the steps necessary to execute steps or elements embodying the various aspects of the invention. Moreover, while the invention has and hereinafter will be described in the context of fully
5 functioning computers and computer systems, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the various embodiments of the invention are capable of being distributed as a program product in a variety of forms, and that the invention applies equally regardless of the particular type of signal bearing media used to actually carry out the distribution. Examples of signal bearing media include
10 but are not limited to recordable type media such as volatile and non-volatile memory devices, floppy and other removable disks, hard disk drives, magnetic tape, optical disks (e.g., CD-ROM=s, DVD=s, etc.), among others, and transmission type media such as digital and analog communication links.

In addition, various programs described hereinafter may be
15 identified based upon the application for which they are implemented in a specific embodiment of the invention. However, it should be appreciated that any particular program nomenclature that follows is used merely for convenience, and thus the invention should not be limited to use solely in any specific application identified and/or implied by such nomenclature.

20 Those skilled in the art will recognize that the exemplary environments illustrated in Figs. 1 and 2 are not intended to limit the present invention. Indeed, those skilled in the art will recognize that other alternative hardware and/or software environments may be used without departing from the scope of the invention.

- 16 -

Publication-Based Game of Chance Through the Internet

The various aspects of the invention will now be described in greater detail in connection with the promotion of a printed publication 70 by an Internet game of chance. In particular, Fig. 3 illustrates in greater detail the electronic communication (i.e., flow of information) between a publication recipient 12, promoter 18, publisher 20, and advertiser 22 as part of the publication-based game of chance through the Internet 16.

Before a contest is publicized, contest rules are established for an upcoming edition of a printed publication 70. The contest rules are generally textual for human understanding. The contest rules are then transformed into a prize indicia schema, whereby aspects of contest rules are translated into parameters that may be automated (e.g., time intervals for the contest and range of potentially prize-winning indicia for each contest interval). An example of potentially prize-winning indicia in accordance with the prize indicia schema may be all possible combinations of alphanumeric symbols of 9 digits in length. The recipient database 42 is updated with the prize indicia schema. More particularly, the recipient database 42 includes assigned potentially prize-winning indicia cross referenced to each recipient 12. The publisher 20 accesses the recipient database 42 for customizing each copy (or promotional article) of the printed publication 70 to include the assigned potentially prize-winning indicia for each respective recipient 12.

- 17 -

In accordance with the contest rules, the promoter 18 conveys to the recipient 12 the electronic communication 71 including the selected prize-winning indicia. As will be discussed in more detail below, the electronic communication system 44 may be a source of information not only for the publication recipient 12, but also serve as an electronic communication path for feedback to the promoter 18.

The publication recipient 12 compares the assigned potentially prize-winning indicia in the received copy of the printed publication 70 with the selected prize-winning indicia on the electronic communication system 44. In the event of a match, the publication recipient 12 contacts the promoter 18 with a confirmation request message 72, such as an email message, filling in an HTML form accessed via the electronic communication system 44, a telephone call, mailed letter, a personal visit to a specified location, etc.

The promoter 18 determines whether a confirmation request message 72 is valid by comparing the assigned prize-winning indicia contained in the confirmation request message 72 with the selected prize-winning indicia or other contest data in the recipient database 42. Depending on the contest rules, the promoter may have further determinations, such as who was the first to respond, whether the confirmation request message 72 was within an allowable response period, whether the prize-winning recipient 12 is ineligible to receive the prize, etc.

The promoter 18 may advantageously perform tracking related to the activities of publication recipients 12 with regard to the electronic

- 18 -

communication 71. For example, a tracking routine 76 hosted on the promoter network server 30 may match numbers of accesses to or requests for the electronic communication system 44. Moreover, the tracking of the electronic communication may advantageously identify specific recipients or non-recipient
5 consumers 12 from self-disclosed information or cross-referenced information from the recipient database 42. Such tracking may advantageously be used by the advertisers 22 and publishers 20 to determine the value of the advertisements, to update distribution of the printed publication 70, to prompt sending prizes, and to modify future contest rules, etc.

10 The present invention contemplates mailing of the printed publication 70 to residents of a selected area. The publication would contain a predetermined or a randomly generated number or other indicia. The indicia could be printed on a mailing label affixed to, or incorporated into the print content of the publication. Such indicia could comprise letters, a combination
15 of letters and numbers, colors, pictures, shapes and the like.

 Thus, with reference to FIG. 4, an illustrative example of a printed publication 70 is shown bearing a customized recipient label 80 including recipient code 82 and a recipient printed address 84. The recipient code 82 may uniquely identify the intended recipient and/or a specific copy of the
20 printed publication 70. The recipient code 82 may further serve as potentially prize-winning indicia for a contest. A publication may include any number of mass circulated or distributed printed materials, e.g., newspapers, home shopping publications, real estate publications, magazines, total market pieces, targeted advertising brochures, department store pamphlets, or the like.

- 19 -

With reference to FIG. 5, another contest inscription 86 is illustrated that may be included for communicating contest related information, and may be incorporated into one or more locations within the printed publication 70. One or more contest numbers 88 serve as potentially prize-winning indicia. Having more than one contest number 88 distinct from the recipient identity or recipient code 82 allows for more than one opportunity to win. Also, more code numbers 88 allows for distributing the code numbers 88 throughout the printed publication 70 to encourage readership. In addition, having the contest number 88 distinct from the recipient identity or recipient code 82 allows for larger number of possible winning recipients by have the same code number 88 on more than one printed publication 70 rather than being limited to listing recipient code 82 on the electronic communication system 44.

It should be appreciated that contest number 88 is illustrative of an assigned potentially prize-winning indicia. An indicia may include any identifying marking, including one or a combination of symbols, colors, graphical depictions, or alphanumeric characters. Also, an identifying marking may include other identifying treatments or additions to a printed publication detectable by one or more senses of a recipient. For example, an audio message may be incorporated into the publication. Alternatively, an identifying marking may include a plurality of codes, any one of which alone is potentially prize-winning indicia.

The contest inscription 86 includes information on interacting with the electronic communication system 44, such as a Uniform Resource

- 20 -

Locator (URL) 90 for an Internet HTML document. The contest inscription 86 advantageously includes a printed version of the rules 92.

FIG. 6 depicts an Internet browser 100 rendering an HTML-based electronic communication 71 in the form of a web page 102. The recipient 12
5 may access the web page 102 to learn the selected prize indicia 104 for a current contest interval. Advantageously, the web page 102 may include other features, such as a confirmation of winning indicia 106, such as information how to send a confirmation request message 72 or an on-line form to accomplish the confirmation. Also, a request publication 108 button may
10 provide a convenient way for requesting a printed publication 70. In addition, rules of the contest 110 may be available. Also, a link may be included for allowing a non-recipient consumer 12 to subscribe to notification 112. The consumer may provide a recipient electronic address sufficient to route a notification message to the recipient 12. For example, the promoter 18 may
15 send an email message to the recipient electronic address notifying the recipient 12 that a new selected prize-winning indicia 104 has been posted, or the email message may contain the new selected prize-winning indicia 104. As another example, a notification message in the form of a digital page or automated telephone message may be periodically sent containing the new
20 selected prize-winning indicia 104. As an additional example, the notification message may be an email message with a computer file attachment (e.g., audio, digital text, digitized video, stored facsimile, graphic, or an HTML document incorporating these and other forms of information).

- 21 -

The web page 102 also provides an opportunity to display additional advertisement 114 or other promotional features.

To enhance the information gathering potential of the web page 102, other features may be included such as a requirement or an option to
5 input recipient identifying information such as a recipient code 82. Entering the code 82 may be a prerequisite, for instance, to obtain the selected prize indicia 104. As another example, the recipient 12 may be allowed and encouraged to enter demographic information that may be stored by the promoter in the promotion database 42. Therefore, the promoter 18 is capable of tracking
10 recipient interest in the publication-based game of chance, as well as determining the characteristics of recipients 12 that are participating in the contest.

It should be appreciated that developing a web page 102 or other form of electronic communication 71 having the aforementioned content is a
15 routine matter for those of ordinary skill in the art having the benefit of the instant disclosure.

Fig. 7 depicts a procedure for a promoter 18 to promote advertising (block 130), which may be executed on the promoter computer system and/or a promoter network server. Promoter procedure 130 begins
20 with receiving prize indicia schema (block 132). The contest rules, including potentially prize-winning indicia, are thus established so that potentially prize-winning indicia may be assigned to each promotional article, or copy of the printed publication 70 (block 134). The development of the prize indicia schema is depicted as manually performed outside of the promoter procedure

- 22 -

130. It should be appreciated that automated procedures may be developed, as would be apparent, to repetitively produce prize indicia schema based on predetermined constraints as to contest intervals, odds of winning, and the number of recipients.

5 Then a manual event occurs where each copy of the printed publication is distributed to the assigned recipient (block 136), typically performed external to the promoter procedure 130. The promoter 18 then selects the prize-winning indicia for the current contest interval in accordance with the contest rules (block 138), and then electronically communicates the
10 selected prize-winning indicia (block 140). Advantageously, the promoter procedure 130 then tracks electronic communication (block 141) for purposes such as gauging the effectiveness of the promotion.

 Then, the promoter procedure 130 waits for a confirmation request message (block 142). If received, then a determination is made as to
15 whether a valid match exists between the recipient and/or assigned potentially prize-winning indicia of the confirmation request message and the actual prize-winning indicia (block 144). If a match exists, then the prize is awarded (block 146). Then, a determination is made as to whether the entire contest is on going (block 148). The contest may expire to due a time limit or due to a
20 maximum number of responding recipients having sent confirmation request messages, or other reasons. If the contest has expired in block 148, then the promote advertising procedure 130 returns to block 132 for the next contest. If the contest is ongoing in block 148, then a determination is made as to whether a current contest interval has expired (block 150). If not expired,

- 23 -

then processing returns to block 142 to continue waiting to receive confirmation. If the contest interval has expired in block 150, then processing returns to block 138 to select and electronically communicate new selected prize-winning indicia.

5 Monitoring of the expiration of an entire contest or of a contest interval also includes passing control to block 148 from block 142 if no confirmation is received and from block 144 if a match is not found from a confirmation request message.

FIG. 8 depicts a procedure (block 160) for a recipient 12 to play
10 an advertising promotion. First, a recipient 12 receives a copy of a printed publication (promotional article) (block 162) and notes the included potentially prize-winning indicia (block 164) in the copy. Then, the recipient 12 reviews the electronic communication to determine whether a match exists between the selected prize-winning indicia in the electronic communication and the
15 assigned potentially prize-winning indicia in the copy (block 166). If a match exists in block 166, the recipient reviews the confirmation method described or facilitated by either the printed publication or the electronic communication (block 168) and complies by confirming the selected prize-winning indicia to the promoter 18 (block 170). Thereafter, procedure 160 returns to block 162
20 to await another copy of a new printed publication.

If no match existed in block 166, then the recipient 12 may determine whether the contest is over (block 172), and if so return to block 162 to await to receive a new promotional article and the start of a new contest. If in block 172 the contest was not over for this recipient, then

- 24 -

opportunities exist for the assigned potentially prize-winning indicia to be selected in another contest interval. Thus, the recipient may wait for the next contest interval (block 174) and then return to block 166 to determine whether the indicia match. These determinations of the contest expiration and contest
5 interval expiration may advantageously be facilitated by electronic communication to the recipient from the promoter.

Various modifications may be made to the illustrated embodiments without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

For example, the printed publication 70 is described herein as
10 including advertisements. It should be appreciated that consistent with the invention printed publications 70 without advertisements may be promoted with the interactive contest described herein.

As another example, each printed publication may not be assigned to a specific recipient, but rather given away in some other fashion. For
15 instance, the printed publication 70 may be free to be picked up or included in the packaging for another product. Consequently, confirmation request message 72 referencing the potentially prize-winning indicia assigned to a specific copy of the printed publication may require physical confirmation (e.g., presenting or mailing in the actual assigned indicia inscribed in the printed
20 publication).

What is claimed is:

- 25 -

1. A method of promoting a printed publication comprising:
forwarding a copy of the printed publication to a recipient via a
recipient address, the recipient address stored in a database, the copy
of the printed publication having a potentially prize-winning indicia;
5 electronically communicating a selected prize winning indicia to
the recipient;
receiving a confirmation request message identifying the
recipient;
confirming a match between the potentially prize-winning indicia
10 in the copy of the printed publication forwarded to the recipient and the
selected prize-winning indicia; and
presenting a prize associated with the selected prize winning
indicia to the recipient in response to confirming the match.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising incorporating an
advertisement into the printed publication.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein electronically communicating
includes displaying the selected prize winning indicia on a web page accessible
by the recipient.
4. The method of claim 3, further comprising soliciting additional
demographic information from the recipient and storing the additional
demographic data in a data base.

- 26 -

5. The method of claim 3, further comprising displaying an advertisement on the web page.

6. The method of claim 3, further comprising displaying contest rules on the web page.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein electronically communicating includes periodically transmitting a notification message to the recipient, the notification message including at least one of an audio message, a facsimile message, and a text message.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the notification message includes an advertisement.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein electronically communicating includes soliciting a recipient electronic address, which is sufficient for routing the notification message to the recipient, before periodically transmitting the notification message.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the recipient electronic address comprises an e-mail address.

- 27 -

11. A method of playing a contest promoting a printed publication,
the method comprising:

receiving a copy of a printed publication having assigned
potentially prize-winning indicia;

5 accessing an electronic communication including a selected
prize winning indicia;

comparing the assigned potentially prize winning indicia in the
copy of the printed publication with the selected prize winning indicia
contained in the electronic communication;

10 in response to a match between the assigned potentially prize
winning indicia and the selected prize winning indicia, sending a
confirmation request message to a promoter of the contest.

- 28 -

12. A printed publication promotion computer system, the system comprising:

5 a database including a plurality of promotion contest records, each promotion contest record including identity, address, and assigned potentially prize winning indicia for a recipient of a copy of a printed publication, the database further including a selected prize winning indicia; and

10 an electronic communication system configured to convey to the recipient an electronic communication including the selected prize winning indicia.

- 29 -

13. The printed publication promotion computer system of claim 12, wherein the electronic communication is a transmitted Internet web page.

14. The printed publication promotion computer system of claim 12, further comprising:

a confirmation request message system for receiving confirmation request messages from the recipient.

- 30 -

15. An apparatus, comprising:

(a) a memory; and

(b) a program resident in the memory, the program configured to facilitate a promotion of a printed publication by assigning a potentially prize winning indicia to a copy of the printed publication, by selecting and electronically communicating the selected prize winning indicia to a recipient of the copy of the printed publication, and by confirming a match between the assigned potentially prize winning indicia and the selected prize winning indicia in response to a confirmation request message from the recipient.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the program is further configured to electronically communicate the selected prize winning indicia to the recipient by an Internet web page accessible by the recipient.

17. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the program is further configured to electronically communicate the selected prize winning indicia to the recipient by one of an email message, a telephone message, and a digital page message.

18. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the program is further configured to electronically receive the confirmation request message.

- 31 -

19. A program product, comprising:

(a) a program configured to facilitate a promotion of a printed publication by assigning a potentially prize winning indicia to a copy of the printed publication, by selecting and electronically communicating the selected prize winning indicia to a recipient of the copy of the printed publication, and by confirming a match between the assigned potentially prize winning indicia and the selected prize winning indicia in response to a confirmation request message from the recipient; and

(b) a signal bearing medium bearing the program.

20. A program product of claim 19, wherein the signal bearing medium comprises at least one of a recordable medium and a transmission medium.

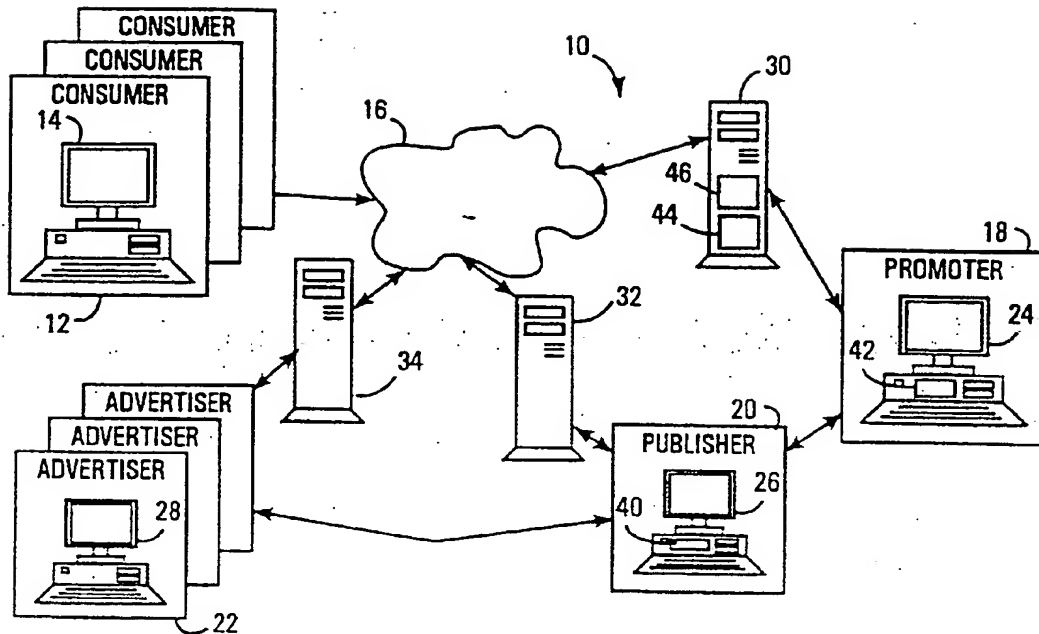


FIG. 1

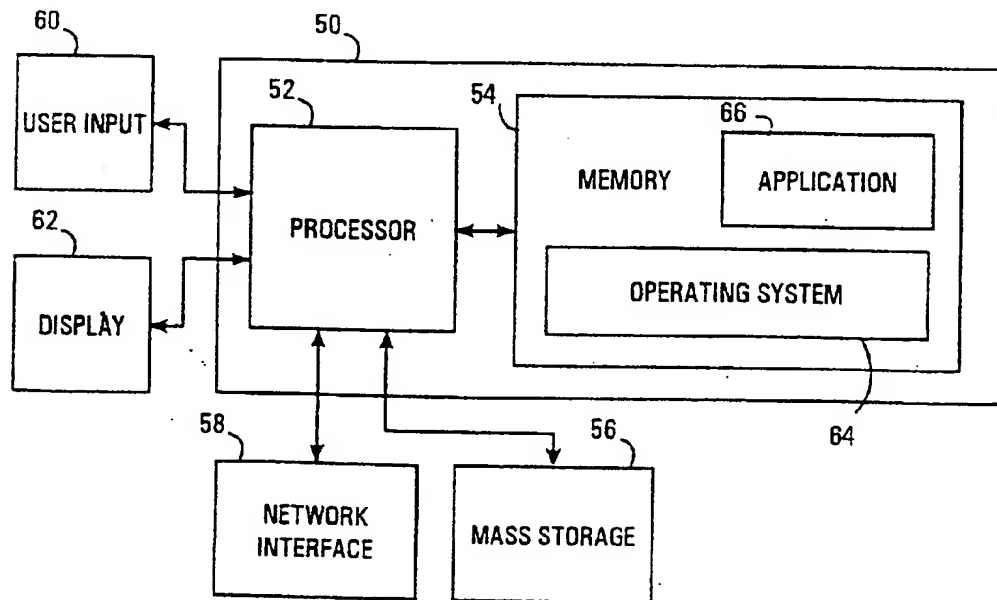


FIG. 2

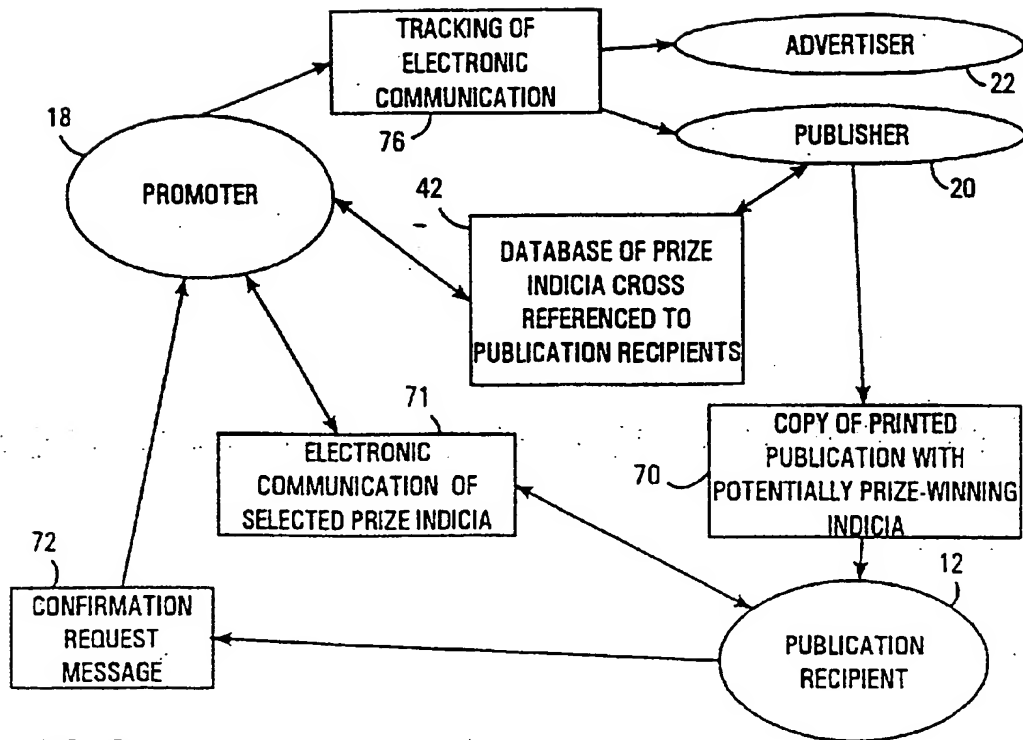


FIG. 3

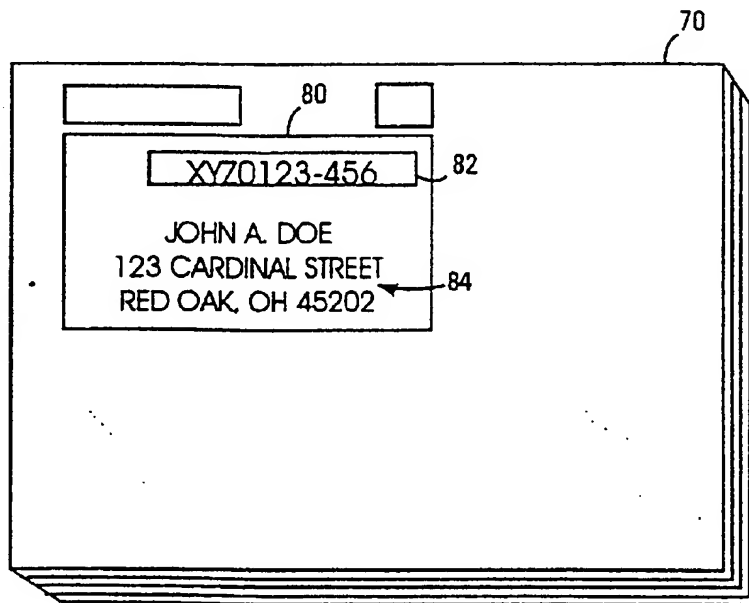


FIG. 4

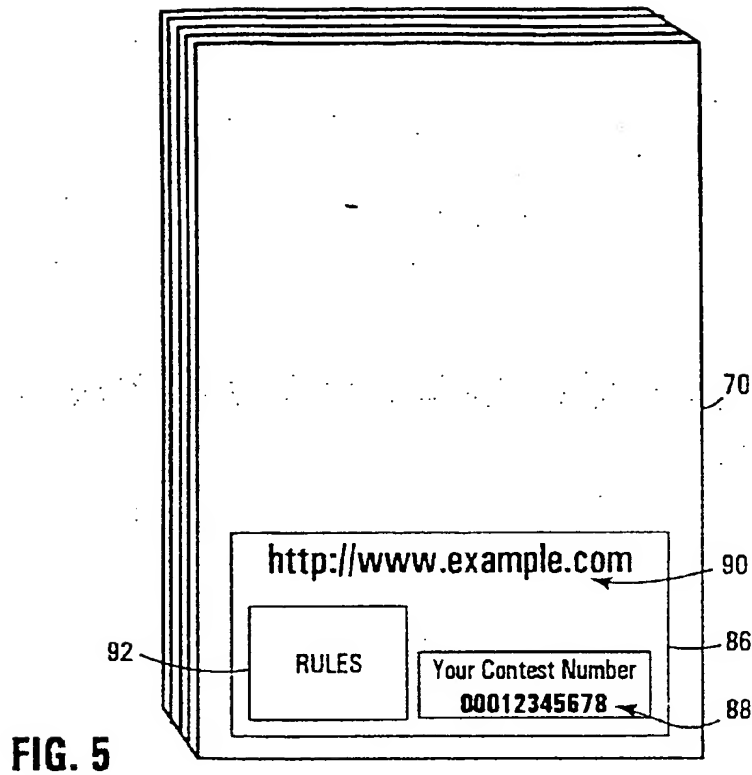


FIG. 5

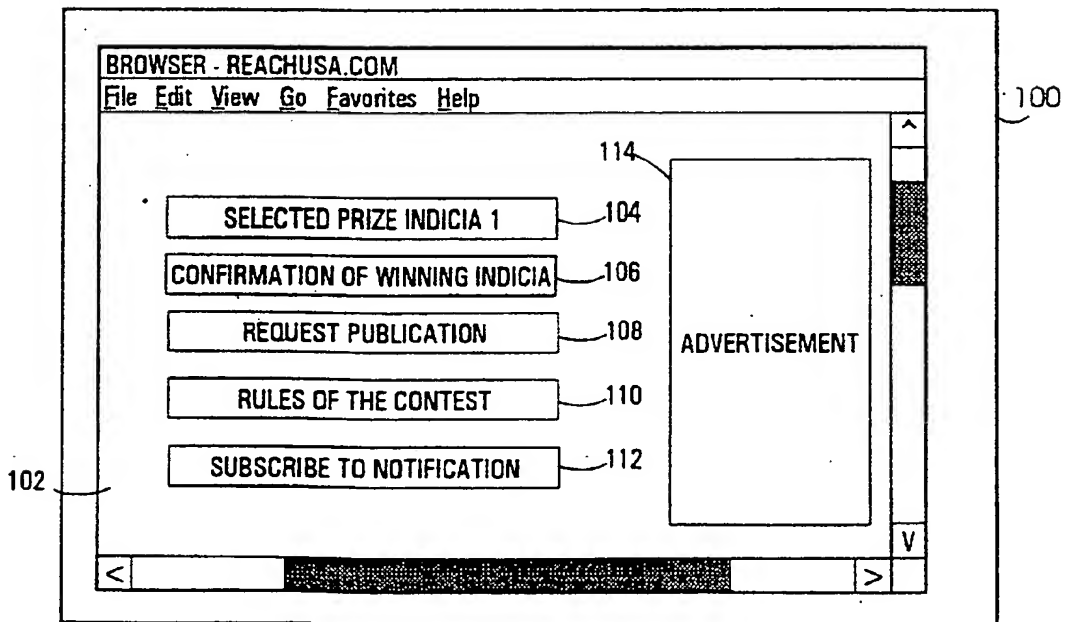


FIG. 6

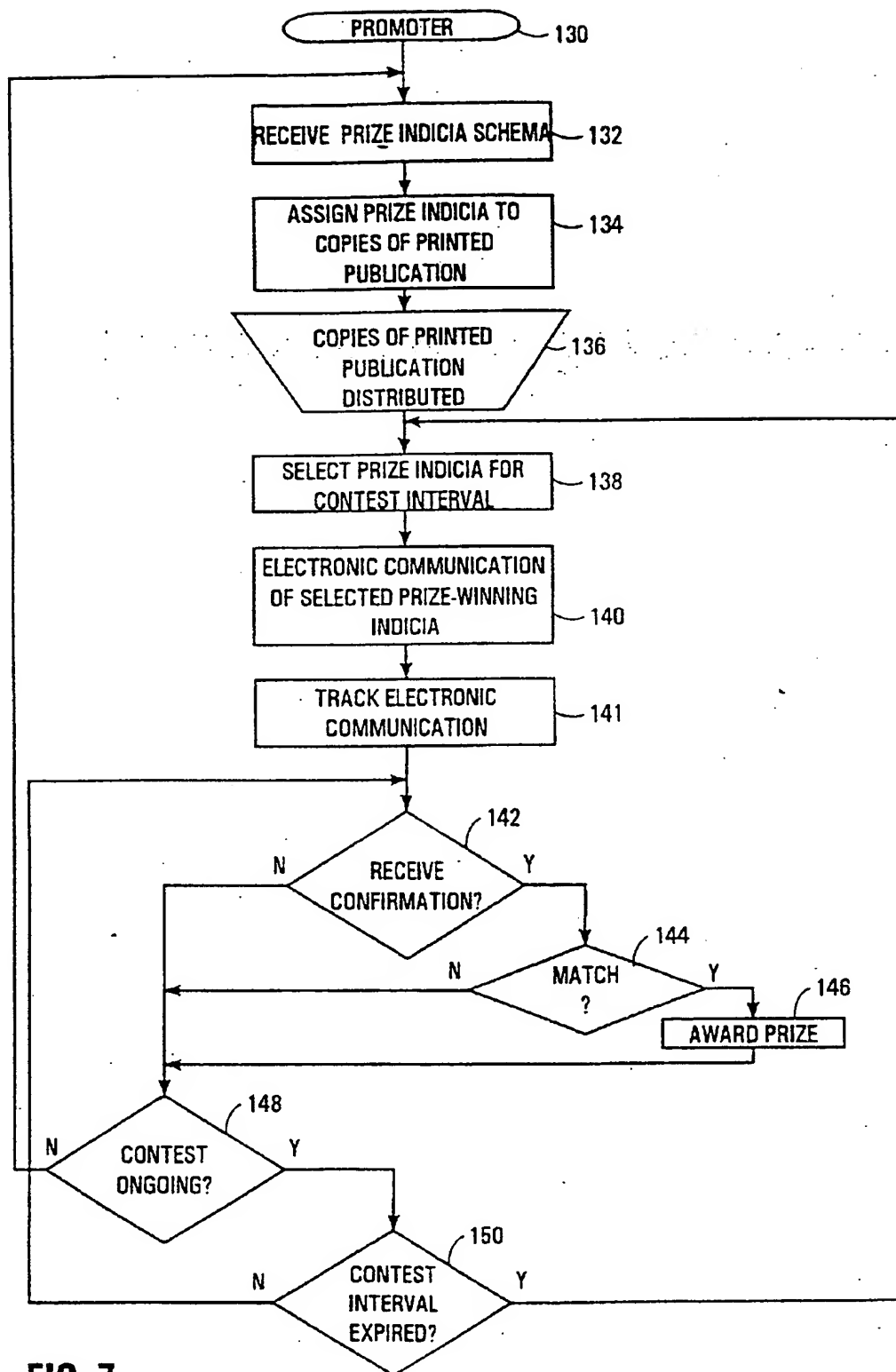
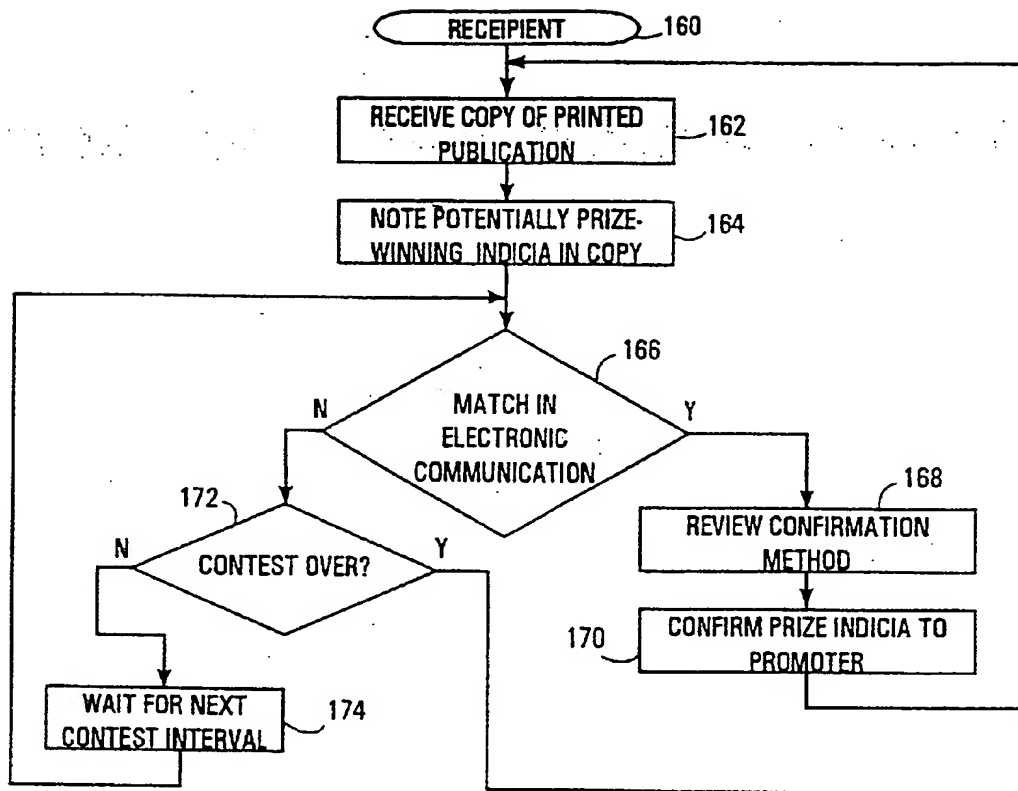


FIG. 7

**FIG. 8**